

(d) removing at least a portion of the L-ascorbic acid from the post reaction solution; and

(e) recycling unreacted starting material back to the reactor.

25. (Amended) The method of claim 19, wherein the starting material comprises an aqueous solution from a fermentation process for producing 2-keto-L-gulonic acid.

26. (Amended) The method of claim 19, wherein the starting material comprises an aqueous solution of 2-keto-L-gulonic acid derived from the hydrolysis of the bisacetone of 2-keto-L-gulonic acid or the esters of 2-keto-L-gulonic acid.

27. (Amended) The method of claim 19, wherein the starting material comprises an aqueous solution of 1 to 40 weight percent 2-keto-L-gulonic acid.

28. (Amended) The method of claim 19, wherein the starting material comprises an aqueous solution of 5 to 30 weight percent 2-keto-L-gulonic acid.

29. (Amended) The method of claim 19, wherein the starting material comprises an aqueous solution of 8 to 15 weight percent 2-keto-L-gulonic acid.

REMARKS

Claims 1-57 were pending in the present application. Claims 1-18, however, are cancelled without prejudice by the present amendment to advance the prosecution of the present application. The remaining claims 19-57 are pending and are hereby presented with new claim 58 for reconsideration. New claim 58 and rewritten claims 19 and 25-29 do not present any new matter. New claim 58 has been added to specify 2-keto-L-gulonic acid, diacetone-2-keto-L-gulonic acid, or an ester of 2-keto-L-gulonic acid as starting materials for Applicants' process. Support for new claim 58 is found on page 9, lines 22-25 of the specification. Claims 19 and 25-29 have been rewritten to correct minor errors, and to provide clarification of the present invention. Specifically, the claim has been rewritten to use the term "starting material" in place of the terms "2-keto-L-